

GOAT.



AND THE TERROR BIRDS.

BOOK ONE IN THE GOAT SERIES
BY PJ GILBERS
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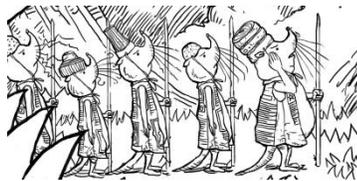
An unlikely adventure.

By PJ Gilbers

www.PJGilbers.com

Goat. And the terror birds is the first of the Goat Adventure Series.

DEDICATED, WITH GRATITUDE, TO THE BRAVE
SOLDIERS
OF THE WEBSTER GROVES
UNDERTHEPORCH
SHREW ARMY:



GENERAL RACHEL
COLONEL AUSTIN
MAJOR SYDNI
PRIVATE, FIRST CLASS MORGAN

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CHAPTER ONE

“Momma says a goat is moving in the old Woodruff house. She said she met him. And she said he was really nice.” Suzie was walking to school with her cousin, Mac. Only Suzie never just walked. Suzie twirled. Always.

“A goat? Goats don’t live in houses or have furniture. You got it all wrong. As usual.” Mac was ten and three quarters. Suzie had just turned eight.

Suzie did a giant twirl, kicking up dust. “You’ll see, smarty pants.”

They ran into their kitchen in search of food, just like they did every day after school. Only today...was different.

Because today, standing in the kitchen, was a goat, wearing an apron while searching through their cabinets.

“Hi! I bet you’re our new neighbor. I’m Suzie and this is my cousin, Mac. He’s ten and three quarters. I’m eight. He lives with us ‘cuz his mom died and his dad is off in the jungles somewhere looking for the Terror Bird.”

Mac rolled his eyes. “Tell him our whole life story, why don’t you?”

“Good afternoon,” the goat said, handing them a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Mac took a cautious step closer.

“My name is William. I have indeed just moved in and I sensed hungry children were in need of some cookies. Now, I thought it would be a good idea if we start dinner since your mother will be late tonight.”

Mac took a cookie while Suzie was already finishing her second and reaching for a third.

“Goats don’t talk or walk on their hind legs. This must be a joke...a trick!”

“Indeed,” William mused as he bustled around, setting bowls out and searching the cabinets, as if a goat in the kitchen was normal. Then he started throwing the contents of the cabinets and refrigerator all around the room. Cinnamon and bread crumbs, sugar and vanilla, all flew in different directions.

Mac screamed at him to stop. “What’s wrong with you? Stop it! You’re making a huge mess...!”

“Whatchya making?” Suzie asked, twirling in the flour and food coloring on the floor, making wondrous designs.

“I believe brownies should do well. Brownies and perhaps a broccoli pie.”

“Yippee, yippee, yippee!” Suzie twirled then began to paint smeared rainbows on the walls with the floury goop.



“This is insane. Goats can’t talk or cook. Now get out of here!”

William was holding a carton of eggs, holding each egg up to the light.

“Has a bump,” and he threw it over his shoulder, “too yellow.” He threw it. “Funny shape on the bottom.” He threw it.

Splat, splat, splat. They hit the wall behind the sink and slid slowly down.

“Ah, now that is a perfect egg.” He cracked the egg into the mixing bowl, then poured a mountain of flour in, turning the mixer on, and creating spectacular clouds.

“I’m not, I repeat *not*, cleaning this up!” Mac wiped flour from his face. “You deranged, insane, mammal—cut it out! Suzie stop! You’re just making it worse!”

William smiled at the mess, snapped his fingers, and froze time.

“Perhaps, dear reader, you are wondering how we arrived at this interesting place. A little about me...You see, my father was a goat, as was his father before him. We come from a very long line of goat explorers, inventors, pilots, astronauts. I am a goat following those lines, for I am a goat on a mission.

“It began last week. I was planting carrots in my new garden when I overheard Suzie and Mac talking. Mac was sad, of course, because of the sudden loss of his dear mother and the absence of his father, when I was annoyed to hear a most obnoxious child named Rhett calling Mac ‘orphan boy.’ It seems that they were tormenting Mac because he couldn’t ride a bicycle.

“I knew immediately that I had to intervene, to step in, to empower this troubled lad! This is my mission, and its name is ‘Mac,’ and I am inviting you to come along with me.”

He snapped his fingers and everything began flying and spilling and twirling again.

William finished baking the brownies and broccoli pie in no time.

Mac was furious. “I don’t know what you are, some mutant or alien or something but, I am NOT cleaning this up!”

William seemed to not hear him. “I suppose we should get busy cleaning, don’t you both think so?”

Suzie, now covered in flour paste of many colors, nodded happily. Mac made growling noises.

William dashed out of the kitchen and hurried back with tape, towels, and a stereo. Laughing, he turned on a Salsa station while taping towels to their heads, hands, backs, knees and feet. Then he sprayed them with water, added a little soap, and began dancing.

William and Suzie danced around the room, cleaning and polishing while Mac stood, dripping, watching, and making grrrrr noises. Although he was growling he did almost smile once and he did allow his feet to cautiously slide around, mopping up what Suzie had missed.

They heard a car pull up. William hurriedly collected the towels and slipped out the back just as Mrs. Maddy Donahue walked in.

“Look at this place! I’ve never seen it sparkle so! Do I smell something cooking?”

“Brownies and broccoli pie,” Suzie twirled with excitement.

“That’s fantastic. I haven’t had broccoli pie in I don’t know how long...”

CHAPTER TWO

Dylan, Mac’s father, stood on the deck of the colossal, crowded, cargo ship, watching a storm rolling in from the west.

“We will be ashore soon, my friend,” said Alex, a short Egyptian man. “Are you sure you want to go into those jungles and look for this mythical bird?”

“I have heard about it for years. Larger than an ostrich. The Terror Bird. It’s a raptor, meat eater, supposed to be ten feet tall. Can you imagine?”

“Then why haven’t they found one yet? It is a legend, that’s all. Like the Big Feet creature. You risk your life going into the jungle.”

“I’ve been in jungles before, and deserts, and mountains, and oceans. They say it’s extinct but villagers keep reporting they’ve seen it, even been attacked by it. I’ve got to go. I just have to. And I need the money. If I can discover one, document it, I can make enough money to go home to my son. He and his mom need money. Even though we’re divorced... I can’t wait to get back to my son. And besides, I feel like this is what I’m supposed to do. My destiny!”

Alex laughed. “Well, if I did not have flat feet, am allergic to bee stings, and have poor night vision, I would surely go with you...”

CHAPTER THREE

Rani, the sister of Mac’s enemy, Rhett, was walking back and forth waiting for Mac to come out of his house. She didn’t want it to look obvious that she was waiting for him but she had a new puppy and she couldn’t wait to show it to him.

Rani smiled when she saw him. “Hi!”

“Hey Rani! Cute puppy.

“I jussssst got him for my bbbbbbirthday.”

Mac sat in the dirt and played with the feisty golden puppy. Rani really liked Mac. He never made fun of her stutter and they had fun together.

Just then a group of boys, led by Rhett, rode up on their bikes.

“Where’s your bike, Mac? ‘Thought you had such a cool bike.” Rhett laughed and the boys laughed with him.

“I do, jerk. It’s in the shop. I bent the axle a little when I was jumping. Made it over three trash cans.”

“You did? That’s wonnnnderful , Mac,” Rani said.

“You are so full of crap!” Rhett said. “You don’t even know how to ride! I bet you still got training wheels, right guys?” They all laughed. Again.

“Rrrrrrhett, you shut up. You are sssssso mmmean!”

Rhett ignored her.

Mac stood a little taller. “Get lost, Rhett. I could ride circles around you with one hand tied behind my back, balancing a fish bowl on my head, and a blindfold on.”

Rani stepped closer to Mac. “Yeah!”

“Yeah.”

“Come on Rani,” Rhett said, “don’t get close to orphan boy. You might get his cooties and you’ll never get ‘em off ‘ya. Come on, guys! Nothing to see here. Nothin’ at all!”

The boys rode off spraying Mac and Rani with the loose gravel.

“I know you can ride your bike real good, Mac,” Rani said and patted his shoulder. “I know you haven’t taken it out of the ggggggarage yet bbbbecause...”

Mac sighed and kicked the dirt. “Cause my dad...I wanted to wait to do it with my dad. As soon as he gets home we’ll get it out. It’s special, you know? He promised.”

He patted the puppy then shuffled slowly back into the house.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dylan was talking to a farmer in the beautiful rural part of Patagonia. The morning was warm, with a heaviness of rain.

“So, you’re telling me that you have seen, with your own eyes, what they call the Terror Bird?”

The farmer smiled and took his hat off. “Yes. Oh, yes. Many times. Its name...terror...is right. Listen to me; it will knock you down. It will attack. It steals children! It is taller than a man and its beak is like the condor, hooked, massive. It rips meat from the bone. We, who live here, we know. We have seen it. Many, many times. You must not go after it on your own.”

“Where do you see it? Take me. I can pay you.”

The farmer shook his head and began to walk away. Then he turned and looked at him, worried.

“Okay. I take you part way. But then, you are on your own. But, please, reconsider. Do not go after this monster. Please.”

Dylan shook his hand. “Not to worry. I’ve hunted the great white, been on the rim of volcanos, and survived in the deepest jungles of Africa. I am, you see, a photographer!”

The man looked at him and muttered, walking toward the jungle, “And a fool.”

CHAPTER FIVE

It was time for bed. Mac found his aunt going through the bills. He knew she was worried about money.

“Any mail for me today?” he asked.

She stopped and looked up, smiling. “No, sweetheart, not today. But soon I bet. I’ve contacted everyone I can to get a message to your dad. I’m sure he’ll surface soon.”

He nodded. “Yeah. I know he will. He might be in the Antarctic or under the ocean. Never know with him.”

She smiled and took his hand.

“I know; I miss him, too. Did you know that your dad and I dated before he met your mom? A long time ago...”

“No way.”

She laughed. “I was crazy about him. We went everywhere together...had so much fun. And then he met your mom. He didn’t know she was my sister and well...the rest is history I guess. I was the flighty one. The artist. Your mom was practical, sensible. They were a good pair.” She looked away and he realized that she really liked his dad.

“Night, Mac. Sleep well.”

“Night.”

Mac’s room was a make-shift combination of his aunt’s art supplies, half-finished sculptures, and endless boxes of beads, glue, buttons and paints which had all been pushed aside to make room for him.

Mac pulled a box from under the bed and sat on the floor next to it. He found the wrinkled picture of his dad. Smoothing it over and over he stared at it for a long time.

“Think about me tonight, Dad. Remember me. Mom...she’s gone. It was so fast...pneumonia. Just...gone. I miss you, Dad. So much.”

He slid the box back under the bed, placing the picture under his pillow. But he waited to cry until he turned out the light.

William, hiding in the bushes outside Mac’s window sighed.

“I must make my calls. I must call in the troops,” he whispered to the hushed, sad night.

CHAPTER SIX

The next morning Mac heard Aunt Maddy on the phone. He hid in the hallway, knowing she was trying to keep things a secret from him and Suzie.

“...of course I’m keeping him, he’s my sister’s child...no, he is not a burden!...Yes, she had a life insurance policy but what I’m trying to explain is that her ex-husband has to sign the papers, the money goes to him, and we can’t locate him now...no, he didn’t run out, he travels all around the...yes, I know, I am two months’ behind on the payments but if I just had more time I’m certain we’ll find him...please, just another couple of months...I see. Yes. Sell. I see. Well, then that’s what we will do...”

Mac's stomach hurt but he suddenly, weirdly, felt better when he saw William at the kitchen window waving at him, motioning him to come outside.

William had a safari type vest on with a carrot sticking out of one of the many pockets.

"Walk with me," he said in a hushed voice.

William led him to a back part of the yard with overgrown trees and bushes.

"Listen to me, Mac. Everything is going to be okay. In fact, better than okay. Tomorrow an unpleasant woman will show up and place a For Sale sign in the yard. Very soon after this people will begin touring through the place wanting to buy it. It is a beautiful old house, in need of a little work perhaps, but very desirable."

"How do you know...?"

"My dear boy, you are talking to a goat. And you question my information?" He winked.

"I guess you aren't the average goat."

"I should say not." He pulled a dog whistle out of one of his many pockets and blew it.

"Do not be afraid. Everything is under control."

"What do you mean...afraid of..."

Suddenly the bushes began to rustle and tiny creatures poured out, lining up in a perfect military formation. Many were wearing tiny helmets, and many had miniature spears.



“What?” Mac was stunned.

“Please, let me introduce you to the North Underwood Shrew Army.”

He clicked his back hooves together and saluted, then nudged Mac to do the same.

Mac saluted.

A larger, fatter shrew with a silvery, sniffley snout marched out and faced William and Mac, returning the salute.

“Sir William, how may we be of service? Troops have been traveling from all over the region when your call came.”

Mac stared at William. “Sir?”

“Pay attention, boy. This is important. Thank you, Colonel. This human lives in the structure behind us with his family. In the next few days his territory will be invaded by hostile humans who want his structure.”

The ranks mumbled and grumbled.

“It is your mission, Colonel, if you and your troops are willing, to create chaos...”

“We will kill the humans!” the Colonel yelled and the shrews shouted and jumped up.

“Kill the humans! Death to the humans!”

“No, Colonel. No, no. No casualties. We only want to frighten them, cause a disruption in their operations. We merely need to buy some time, you see. The bank must believe Mac’s aunt *is* selling the house. But...we do not want anyone to buy it. Understand? We just need to stall, buy some time.”

The Colonel paced back and forth.

“No casualties, eh? What a shame, what a shame. Frighten them, you say. I see, yes, I see. Yes, humans often scream and run when they see us. It is an old dwelling...I have the perfect plan! Leave it to us, Sir, we will begin scouting tonight. The human should inform his family, I suppose, so they will not be terrified. We will post lookouts to alert us when the hostile humans arrive.”

“Excellent. I am in your debt, Colonel.”

“Yeah, thanks,” Mac said.

“Human boy, we are at your service. We have heard of your father. We understand the mission...very well.”

A bugler blasted a loud buuubuubuuuu. The troops dismissed, many going in groups to Mac’s house.

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” Mac asked.

“The Colonel is a good soldier. He will deliver. You’ll see. You will have to tell Suzie and your aunt quite gently, I’m afraid.”

Mac sat down on the broken back steps.

“Who or *what* are you?”

William smiled. “I am William. A goat. My father was a goat, as was his father. But most importantly, I am your friend.”

“But, you talk and the shrews talked. Maybe I’m going crazy!”

“The world is a place of mystery and miracles. Accept that, as does your dear cousin, Suzie. Accept and allow, dear boy, and you will find what you need in life.”

William whistled as he walked back to his house.

Mac sat and watched the sunset, wondering how he was going to explain this all to Aunt Maddy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Dylan had always been good at climbing trees and he knew, from the reports he’d gotten, that a view from above would not only be better for photographing this monster bird, but it would also be safer.

He had been snapping pictures all day of bees, beetles, butterflies, snakes, salamanders, and skunks. He knew he could sell them for a small amount, but he had also been tracking what he was convinced were the footprints of a very large, very heavy bird.

Once he was high in the tree he decided to bait the bird and opened a can of tuna, tossing it to the ground to tease it out. Then...he waited.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mac snuck outside just as the sun was coming up. It was a Saturday so he knew Suzie and Aunt Maddy would be sleeping in. The old door creaked as he pushed into the crowded, musty garage. Most of the stuff from his mom was stacked neatly all around him, surrounding him with boxes of memories and sadness. He managed to get his bike out and took it to the driveway.

“Okay, Mac,” he told himself, “you’re ten years old. You can do this. Just get on and ride!”

He peddled slowly, then a little faster, faster until...

He hit a rock, the front wheel turned, and he crashed hard into a tree. The bike was bent and Mac was furious.

“Dad!” he whispered. “You promised!”

When he was putting his bike back he heard his aunt screaming. Running inside he knew what he was going to find.

Aunt Maddy stood far away from the open refrigerator spattering and spitting words that he couldn’t understand.

He walked up to the refrigerator and met the angry stares of five shrews.

“What’s up with you? I thought you was gonna tells your family last night!” The shortest, fattest shrew tapped his foot.

“Okay, okay.” He turned to Aunt Maddy who was now sitting on the floor babbling.

“Talking, talking mice.”

“They’re shrew’s, actually, Aunt Maddy.”

“Shrews. In my refrigerator, on the pickles, the pepperoni pizza, the pecan pie!...Talking shrews!”

He sat next to her and explained it while Suzie joined them and met the shrews. Soon the tiny soldiers were twirling with her around the kitchen. In no time there were dozens of shrews laughing and dancing with Suzie, one on her head, two on her shoulders, and three hanging tightly on her toes. Suzie acted as if she danced every morning with the shrew army. But then that was Suzie.

Mac, seeing William smiling at the window, just shrugged. And *almost* smiled.

An hour later a crabby woman did show up with a sign for their front yard, just as William had predicted. She walked through the house and made Maddy feel bad that things weren't super clean or repaired.

When she was gone Suzie, Aunt Maddy, and Mac began cleaning and painting. By the end of the day things looked better but they were super tired.

They never noticed the pigeons flying in from all directions to William's back porch.

The pigeons were quiet, that is, for pigeons. William stepped out his back French doors and greeted them.

“My friends. Thank you for coming. Major Dragoon, I assume you have informed your troops as to the danger of this mission?”

With this the pigeons fell into line and took a military stance. One had an eye patch, several had scars, all evidence of former battles.

“Danger? We do not know the meaning of danger. We don't see danger, smell danger, hear danger, taste danger...do we, men?”

“Sir, no sir.” They all said.

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